



Success Stories

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The following stories reveal the changing landscape of congregational education in the New York area. Meaningful Jewish education that impacts learners, leaders, and teachers is emerging because lay and professional leaders are boldly innovating.

SUCCESS IN TEACHERS:

Teachers are experiencing ongoing learning focused on supporting positive outcomes in learners. New teacher practice is emerging that can support learners' knowing, doing, believing/valuing and belonging.



Next year, every teacher from *gimmel* on up will have an hour at the end of the day [to learn and work with other teachers]. It is now part of our school's culture. The teachers' focus has changed from "what are the children learning" to "what do teachers need to know to promote learning." We are now focused on learner outcomes and what the goals are for teachers to insure that students learn.

- teacher engaged in ongoing professional development

The teachers got the content and gained things for themselves. They also had an outside consultant working with them and they were empowered to be able to do *hevruta*. They feel validated. We invested in them, one hour a week, paying them to be here and learning. It makes a big difference. We looked at our goals and vision statement. The weekly meetings resulted in ongoing communication. Teacher competency means everything, and if they didn't feel competent, RPL leaders in the congregation worked with them.

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[Our new professional model] has already had a very positive impact on students. Teachers are now coming to class more prepared, having learned about sharing resources, having helped each other by sharing their strengths, doing problem solving together. Students could feel the *chevre* that the teachers had, and that the teachers were helping each other, and students could see themselves working together in groups more.

- Director of Education, LI

SUCCESS IN GENERATING NEW MODELS:

The “dropped off” child as a norm of Jewish education is being replaced. New models are characterized by new definitions for who is the learner, who is the teacher, and when and where learning is taking place. New models include regular engagement of families, locate learning in a community of practice and in Jewish time (e.g. Shabbat), and situate learning in real life practice (e.g. *Tikkun Olam*).



Lilmod B'yachad. A family retreat begins the year of regular family learning linked to living. Families engage in regular home celebration and study twice a month to “study, worship, action, and social time that not only teaches about Judaism, but helps families live Judaism.” As their new rabbi remarks when working with the Leadership Team to plan this new model “this is bold enough to make a difference.”

Masa: Journeys: Families select a path of learning for their family that connects to their interests and passions for Jewish life. Eventually six different paths will be offered with a unique focus like *Tikkun Olam* and Israel. The first path offered is Celebrations. Twice a month in addition to weekly child learning, families learn about and celebrate Jewish holidays in the temple and at home.

Intergenerational Learning Model One version: Elementary school children, teens and seniors learning together in this new model with a focus not only what

learners know, but on how to live in the world today. With a new commitment to creating an educational experience that enables learners to “interpret Judaism so that it may continue to be a source of meaning and inspiration for our time.” Teens and adults study the content of a Torah portion with the rabbi. The Director of Education then helps the intergenerational team prepare a Torah lesson for elementary school children. Intergenerational groups (from seniors, parents, teens to tweens) then engage in Torah learning and foster deepened relationships among students, and between students and other adults in the community by including learning in the home, in the sanctuary (as part of *tefillah*), and in the greater community.

Home Shuling and Community Celebration Weekly small groups of children learn in one another homes with a teacher. Additionally, each Shabbat families celebrate Shabbat together in the synagogue. Adult learning and family learning is provided.

SUCCESS IN LEADERS:

Directors of education, clergy and lay members are working in a collaborative, goal-directed, vision inspired-way to launch and re-launch educational innovation that can positively impact learners.



I see this as a change in thinking about how we want to teach in the religious school. So I’m trying hard not to think of this as a new program, but rather to think about learning in a different way, and because of that, this is how religious school will now be. So this is a new way of learning that we would like to expand.

- Educator, Westchester

We meet regularly to dream together and after we dream we are able to create meaningful learning experiences for students and families. Working in collaboration with my clergy colleagues and lay leadership has made a big difference in the eyes of the community. We support one another and learn from one another with a better understanding that to implement educational change requires a team effort.

- Rabbi Educator, Manhattan

SUCCESS IN LEARNERS:

Children and adults are experiencing Jewish education in ways that promote Jewish meaning, connection, knowledge and living.



The temple became part of our lives, so our lives became more Jewish. For us [Hebrew school became] meaningful in the sense that... All of a sudden the Temple was part of our life in the same way that soccer is. We started to feel that, “of course we go to Temple.”

- Parent

It’s not that we didn’t do volunteer work before. I’ve served on a number of charitable board, but to be honest, I never thought about that work in a Jewish way. And I never thought about engaging my son in it at such a young age. But this has been powerful for us all.

- Parent



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